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AUTHOR Seifert, Edward H.; Seifert, M. Judith
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ABSTRACT

Some promising educational reforms are aimed at the classroom (strengthening the interaction between students and teachers and enhancing the curriculum). Change models most likely to succeed are those that give teachers, students, and other stakeholders a clear, common vision of their school's direction. When teachers translate visions into classroom practice, curricular and instructional change occurs. The change should emphasize teaching that moves away from a model of expert delivery of knowledge from teacher to student to a model of facilitated, engaged learning environments, with students actively engaged in discovery and authentic tasks. The first step in the systemic change process is to build a vision. This should involve members of every sector of the organization that will be affected. The next step is to examine the current situation. The third step is to compare the vision with the current status of the organization, prioritize areas for change, and set goals. The final step is to develop and implement an action plan using action research. The paper examines obstacles to change, discussing types of resistors. It presents research on curriculum change and describes the implementation of teacher leadership in one Texas school district, examining the evaluation of this curriculum change effort. (SM)

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FROM THE TEACHER TO THE TOP

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Edward H. Seifert
Associate Professor
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Commerce, Texas

M. Judith Seifert
Director of Staff Development
Keller Independent School District
Keller, Texas

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From The Teacher To The Top

In our daily lives, we are inundated with information. From the news media, to information on the world wide web, the amount of information available to individuals in today's society is beyond understanding. Some people have said that we are moving beyond the information age into the knowledge age. They point to the fact that we are already well immersed in the information age and that what we really need is a way to sift and sort this information, a way to gauge what is useful and what is not.

The defining characteristic of the knowledge age is perpetual change. Unlike previous transformations, the transformation to the knowledge age is not a period of change, followed by stability. It will usher in an epoch of continuous change on an accelerating time cycle. This means that the kinds of knowledge that will serve each individual and our society as a whole are constantly evolving. Let's reflect on the following facts:

- Every two or three years the knowledge base doubles.
- Every day, 7,000 scientific and technical articles are published.
- Satellites orbiting the globe send enough data to fill 19 million volumes in the Library of Congress-every two weeks.

- High school graduates have been exposed to more information than their grandparents were in a lifetime.
- Only 15 percent of jobs will require a college education, but nearly all jobs will require the equivalent knowledge of a college education.
- There will be as much change in the next three decades as there was in the last three centuries.
- Our economic base has shifted from industry to information. To make an automobile it takes 40 percent ideas, skills, and knowledge and 60 percent energy materials. A computer chip takes 98 percent ideas, skills, and knowledge and 2 percent energy and raw materials. (Leadership and Technology, 1997)

Educators have been addressing change for a long time, and for the past 15 years we have been involved with change intensively. Some of us have believed that our reform effects have dealt with practically every instructional issue one-at-a-time and we persist in our belief that schools are not performing as well as we would like and are in need of additional reforms. Some educators have referred to the call for new reform efforts as "the bird of the month." Each month we get a new bird, its feathers are a different color and the bird sings a

slightly different song, yet this bird does the same things as the bird did the month before. Many educators are reticent to engage in new change initiatives because they have experienced the bird of the month syndrome.

Systemic change offers an opportunity to enact change while moving beyond thinking about individuals and individual organizations, single problems and single solutions. It causes us to think about systems – policy systems, education systems, social service systems, information systems, and yes even technology systems.

Systemic change is a cyclical process in which the impact of change on all parts of the whole and their relationships to one another are taken into consideration. In the context of school, it is not so much a detailed prescription for improving education as a philosophy advocating reflecting, rethinking, and restructuring. At its best systemic change entails working with stakeholders throughout the system to:

- Create a vision of what you want the system to look like and accomplish.
- Take stock of the current situation. Where are we and where to we want to go.

- Identify strengths and weaknesses of the current system in view of the vision.
- Target items for improvement.
- Establish a plan for addressing these priority items and for measuring success.
- Assess progress regularly and revise actions as needed.
- Take stock of your actions and use feedback to revisit the vision.

The major question must be asked "How Effective is systemic change in improving educational outcomes? The Education Commission of the States (1989), found that schools using a systemic change model outperformed traditional schools by 30 percent in mathematics, 24 percent in reading, 29 percent in history, and 20 percent in science. All of these data are based on the percentage of correct responses between the 8th and 10th grades.

In a recent report published by the Education Commission of the States (1997), *Bridging the Gap*, the authors stated, "...the most promising reforms are aimed at what goes on in the classroom: strengthening the interaction between student and teachers and enhancing the curriculum. The change models that seem most likely to succeed also seem to be those that give teachers, students,

and other stakeholders a clear and common vision of their school's direction." When teachers take these visions and translate them into classroom practice curricular and instructional change seems to occur.

The change that should occur is the emphasis on teaching that moves away from a model of expert delivery of knowledge from teacher to student, to a model of facilitated, engaged learning environments, where the students are actively engaged in discovery and authentic tasks. The teacher becomes the guide on the side giving more individual attention to students as they go about their activities and delivering information useful to the task at hand.

STEPS OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The first step in the process of systemic change is to build a vision. This process should involve members of every sector of the organization that will be affected. In building the vision of the future the following questions need to be answered:

- What will the ideal look like when it's complete?
- What are you looking forward to most in completing this task?
- What specifically will be most pleasing?
- What has worked most effectively in similar situations in the past?

The next step in the systemic change process is to take a look at the current situation. Collection data and opinions from throughout the organization taking care to get information from those closest to the activities. When looking at the situation, it is very important to appreciate what is already in place. Questions that are useful in addressing this part of the process include:

- What was particularly effective about the way things worked?
- What would you do differently if you could do this again?
- What are the benefits of doing this differently?

The third step in the systemic process is to compare the vision with the current status of the organization, prioritize areas for change and set goals. When making these decisions, several questions immerge that will help focus the thoughts and decision-making process. The questions include:

- What would you choose if you could do what you wanted to do?
- What is the deciding issue for you in this process?
- What are the biggest unanswered questions about the vision?

In the book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) author Peter Senge discusses the concept of comparing the vision with the current reality of the organization. He describes the gap between the two as the source of creative energy and he has

entitled this energy *creative tension*. Imagine a rubber band, stretched between your vision and your current reality. When stretched the rubber band creates tension, representing the tension between vision and current reality. There are only two possible ways for tension to resolve itself: pull reality toward the vision or pull the vision to the reality.

After the vision is established it is time to develop and implement an action plan. Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, or other stake holders in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. Action research engages teachers in a four-step process: (1) identify an area of focus; (2) collect data; (3) analyze and interpret the data; and (4) develop the action plan

OBSTACLES TO CHANGE

Many of you know and some of you have experienced the obstacles to change. These obstacles are many and directly related to the context of the organization. According to psychologist Dennis O'Grady (1998), the ability to change is related to a combination of five fears that stymies the ability to change:

1. **Fear of the Unknown** - The message that many people receive from change comes from the fear of lost control.
2. **Fear of Failure** - Committing to change raises the fear that the change will fail.
3. **Fear of Commitment** - Commitment to one option reduces the chances that your change focus will not be accepted as the direction for the organization.
4. **Fear of Disapproval** - Change forces others to change in relation to you.
5. **Fear of Success** - Change causes other demands to be made of the organization. Will the organization sustain the success?

The fears that O'Grady outlines lead individuals to resist change in many different ways. Resistance to change occurs and in reflection the change leadership attempts to understand why they have not been effective. Resistance to change causes people to react in many different ways. We have categorized these resistors in order to make it easier for the leadership to address their concerns.

1. **Positive resister** - agrees with new ideas and programs, but never moves to implement any changes.
2. **Unique resister** - believes change is good for everyone else but it doesn't work in his or her "unique" situation.
3. **Let-me-be-last resister** - hopes new ideas and programs die before being implemented in his or her program.
4. **We-need-more-time-to study resister** - hopes others will find it difficult to object to this form of resistance.
5. **States-rights resister** - if any of the ideas or programs come from outside of his or her organization he or she wants no part of the change.
6. **Cost-justifies resister** - cost is always the issue, no matter what the cost, large or small.
7. **Incremental change resister** - wants only that change which adds to the current program or system (O"Grady, 1998).

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT CURRICULUM CHANGE

Brooker, Elliott, Macpherson, Thurlow, and Burnett in their *article* *Exploring Teachers' Views of Themselves as Curriculum Leaders* (1997) described the study of 1,500 teachers and administrators. This questionnaire driven research inquired about their levels of engagement in curriculum leadership. Sixty percent (60%) of respondents indicated that they participated either not at all or to a limited extent. There was a considerable difference between the level of engagement reported by administrators (principals, assistant principals, heads of departments, etc.) and that reported by classroom teachers. Eighty-five (85%) of administrators indicated that they participated in curriculum leadership extensively, while only 29 percent of the teachers participated to the same extent.

In addition, to levels of participation, the earlier phases of the study further sought to identify aspects of schools which would encourage higher levels of participation by teachers. Two specific questions were investigated: (1) What are the ideas related to school contexts that shape teachers' curriculum leadership action? (2) What are the relationships between school contextual factors and teachers personal characteristics?

Questions 1 above refers to ideas about how curriculum is conceived in the school (images of curriculum), the way the school is organized (organizational structure), the ways teachers interact in the school (school dynamics), and personal characteristics of teachers (confidence, feelings of empowerment, trust of others, risk taking). When conditions in the school are such that organizational structure, the social dynamics and images of curriculum are empowering to teachers and they feel confident, valued and trusted then teachers are likely to engage in significant levels of curriculum leadership. There is an interplay of these factors. For example, when a teacher feels confident, valued and trusted, the teacher is likely to engage in leadership in order to create a favorable organization, interpersonal relationships, and images of curriculum. On the-other-hand when school factors are appropriate they encourage feelings of confidence, value and trust. It is not a linear causative explanation, rather it is one of dynamic relationships involving self, culture, and action.

Question 2 indicated an interrelationship between images of curriculum, organizational structure, school dynamics, and personal characteristics. These four factors act as a loosely interrelated set of factors, which contribute, to a disposition toward curriculum leadership. Teachers seem to participate in

curriculum leadership to the extent that they feel they have a good understanding of what can and should be achieved by them as leaders, the extent to which they feel capable of such undertaking and how important the leadership activity is to their self-evaluation.

Research has implications for teacher development that are pertinent for both principals and teachers. It is clear that there is a differential involvement in leadership activities between teachers and principals. It appears that principals need to project a view of leadership, which extends beyond themselves to one where there is a density of leadership within the school. It is clear from the literature that diversity of leadership at the school is essential in order to bring about change. The view of leadership that principals need to project is one, which relates leadership to the context of the school, regards it as phenomenon of the school, and recognizes the unique characteristics of the school.

The research by Brooker, Elliott, Macpherson, Thurlow, and Burnett (1997) suggests that traditional roles of teacher and principal have created a hegemony (dominance) of leadership, which is problematic for changing school environments. Teachers may feel reasonably comfortable with leadership associated with their classroom, many do not report having appropriate self-

esteem for leadership outside of that domain. This research indicates one of the keys to successful curriculum change is the development of teacher's leadership and self-esteem.

It requires more than propositional knowledge about leadership being transmitted to teachers. They need to be able to see themselves in possible roles for themselves. Opportunities must be available for them to do this and, as part of this opportunity, development of personal qualities is extremely relevant. Development of such qualities as openness, commitment, trust, confidence and sense of responsibility is essential for the development of leadership in schools.

IMPLEMENTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Curriculum alignment is a project that has been attempted several times in the Keller Independent School District (Texas) with little evidence of successful implementation in district classrooms. In the past curriculum committees had established a scope and sequence for the curriculum but implementation never was realized. As the district began to incorporate the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) into the curriculum, the need for alignment became apparent . To avoid the mistakes of the past, a new vehicle for alignment was developed.

In order to involve as many Keller ISD (KISD) personnel as possible, the curriculum alignment process began. In order to create a bottom-up curriculum alignment, facilitators were hired at each of the ten (10) elementary schools and at each of the two 7-12 secondary attendance zones for the 1998-99 school year. The elementary facilitators received a stipend of $4000 and remain as active classroom teachers. The secondary facilitators serve both the middle and high school campuses for their attendance zones on a full time basis. As part of their assignment the secondary facilitators provide staff development assistence throughout the school year. Curriculum facilitators were selected using the following criteria:

- Evidence of ongoing professional growth endeavors
- Experience in leadership roles on campus and in district
- Ability to commit to obtaining a mid-management certification
- Evidence of a positive relationship with an entire staff as well as understanding of the unique strengths and weaknesses of the home campus
- Willingness to facilitate staff professional development concerning curriculum issues

- Willingness to participate in mediation training and other training to enhance presentation and facilitation skills
- Willingness to make a three year commitment to the program
- Willingness to oversee the scheduling of the fine arts center—secondary only

KISD entered into a partnership with the National School Conference Institute (NSCI) which provided the district with the following services:

- Training in presentation skills for the curriculum facilitators
- Conference registration, housing, transportation, and meals for each facilitator to attend one of the NSCI conferences
- Heidi Hayes Jacobs training on curriculum mapping--the model by which the facilitators would align the KISD curriculum
- Opportunities to view video taped presentations on the following topics became enhancement opportunities for the facilitators:
  - -- Brain-based learning
  - -- Managing system change in America's schools
  - -- Standards and assessment
  - -- Fostering critical thinking

-- Student diversity

-- Character centered teaching

-- Increasing reading achievement

-- Positive, safe and orderly school climate

-- Integrated curriculum

-- Instructional leadership

-- Performance assessment

-- Effective reading strategies

-- Teaching in the block--teaching on extended learning time

-- Technology instruction connection

-- Multiple intelligence

- Opportunities to participate in conference calls with Heidi Hayes Jacobs, and other conference presenters as requested by the KISD facilitators
- Necessary technology equipment to download tapes so those KISD facilitators could participate in discussions on the aforementioned issues and make presentations to their campus groups
- A personal NSCI consultant for training and program structure

The startup costs for this project was $208,000, which included facilitator salaries, the NSCI contract, substitute pay for elementary facilitators taken away from their classrooms, and supplies/materials. The second year costs were reduced to $178,000 in accordance with the reduction of the NSCI contract.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

This bottom-up concept of curriculum change is evaluated on an annual basis using student achievement scores, staff development feedback, and anecdotal teacher evaluation data. The board of education is advised yearly of the work of the facilitators and their effect on teacher development. This development has caused some teachers to become curriculum leaders on their campuses and in the district. To date the process of a bottom-up curriculum alignment has proven to work for KISD, not only in aligning the curriculum, but in teacher participantion in professional growth and leadership.

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